

# OpenTheo

## Kingdom of God (Part 1)



### Kingdom of God - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg delves into the complex and controversial topic of the Kingdom of God. While some believe in two gospels, he argues that the terms "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven" are used interchangeably in Scripture and do not necessarily refer to life after death. Rather, the Kingdom of God is expansive and inclusive, with a spiritual rather than political emphasis. Gregg references various biblical passages, including Isaiah 9 and Romans 9, to further support his interpretation of the Kingdom of God.

### Transcript

Let's begin with this subject, the Kingdom of God. The fact that there's so many of you here makes me think that you already have an interest in the subject, and that's good. I'm not always sure when I announce the topic, Kingdom of God, how many people will have an interest in the subject, since it's kind of a vague concept in the minds of many.

And among those for whom it is not a vague concept, in my opinion, many times there's an inaccurate, specific concept that people have of the Kingdom of God. Obviously, it's possible that my concept is the one that's inaccurate, and that's what you'll have to, of course, judge from Scripture. But while it is the central subject, certainly of the New Testament, one could arguably say of the whole Bible, at least from the time of the founding of the nation of Israel on, it is incumbent on us to search the Scriptures and understand what it is that Jesus was talking about when he said the Kingdom of God is at hand.

And exactly how at hand it was, and in what sense it was at hand. Now, I have three points I want to make initially to make sure that we perceive the importance of the subject. And maybe you do already, and that's why you're here.

If you don't, bear with me. But I know that if you don't quite understand how important the understanding of this topic is, I would remind you that Jesus, when he taught us to pray, taught us to pray, Your Kingdom come. I have all the Scriptures I'm going to give on PowerPoint slides, because I want to go through so many, it's quicker this way than to

look them up.

It takes time to look them up, and we'll not have any lag here. You know that Jesus told us to pray, Our Father which is in heaven, hallowed be your name. And the first petition, and the governing petition of the prayer that he taught us to pray is, Your Kingdom come, your will be done.

Now, you pray this. I'm sure you do. You might not pray it as often as Roman Catholics do, because sometimes they have to pray it 10 or 15 times in a sitting.

But the fact is, you as a Christian, I'm sure, have prayed it maybe daily. I do. Actually, the prayer that Jesus taught is the, in my own morning devotions, it's the framework for my general praying.

I take each line, and it's sort of a skeletal thing. But I have a concept. When I say, Your Kingdom come, there's a lot of information that hangs on that petition, in my thinking, and so in my own praying, I just unpack it with specifics.

But what does it mean, Your Kingdom come? The term, Kingdom come, has passed into the slang of the secular society, where, for instance, people sometimes said they got blown to Kingdom come. I'm not sure how you can get blown to someplace come, but it's obvious that whoever came up with that expression, and the people who use it, think of Kingdom come must be some kind of ultimate destiny at the end of your life. And yet, I don't believe that that fully answers the question, what is Jesus talking about? What are we praying for? Our prayers should have some kind of informational content.

That is, we should have some intellectual awareness of what it is we're asking for. And we pray continually that God's Kingdom will come, but what does that look like? When is it supposed to come? Is it going to come when Jesus comes back? Or is it supposed to come today, while I'm praying? Or has it come before, and it's supposed to come more? What's it all about? What does it mean? And besides our praying, in our preaching. Now, you might not be a preacher, but in all likelihood, you go to a church, or you listen to preachers, on the radio, and in church, and so forth, and maybe you are a person who preaches.

In our preaching, it is central as well. Jesus said, This gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come. Well, most of us are looking forward to the end.

At least those of us who have gotten to be my age or so, we're hoping the end might come before we have too many years to log. If you don't think that, then maybe you and I are on a different page entirely. I'm looking forward to seeing Jesus, and that's what I expect to do when the end comes, is see Jesus.

But the end isn't going to come until the gospel of the Kingdom has been preached in all

the world, as a witness to all nations. Now, we should not presume that just because some message is being preached by missionaries, and in churches around the world, that that is necessarily what Jesus was referring to as the gospel of the Kingdom. It might be, but we would kind of have to know what the gospel of the Kingdom is, in order to know if that's the message being taught.

You might say, well, of course it must be, because, I mean, look, there's so many Bible scholars in these mission movements, certainly they wouldn't be wrong about it. But, you know, there's a lot of different sectarian views as to what is meant by the gospel of the Kingdom, or what the gospel is. For example, there's one theological school, very prominent in evangelical circles, that believes there's two gospels.

One is the gospel of the Kingdom, and the other is the gospel of grace. And they believe the gospel of grace is that which we're supposed to preach now, and the gospel of the Kingdom is to be preached after the rapture of the Church. Well, if that's true, then we needn't worry about this, because we'll be gone before it becomes pertinent.

But the fact is, Jesus preached the gospel of the Kingdom, his disciples preached the gospel of the Kingdom. And it seems to me that's the gospel we're supposed to be preaching. And when we have preached it, not you and I personally necessarily, but when the body of Christ has reached the world with this message, Jesus says, then the end can come.

And I'm looking forward to it. That's kind of important to me. Now, there's another thing that makes this important for us to perceive the relevance of the Kingdom, and that is in our pursuing.

We all know that Jesus said, Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things, he said all these things, in the context of food and clothing, necessary physical needs, all these things will be added to you. Now, that's a pretty sweeping promise, and a really wonderful one when you think about it. If you really seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and if this promise is true, you needn't seek for anything else.

Everything you need will be added to you in the course of seeking God's Kingdom. Now, I know a lot of people who seem to be seeking other things than God's Kingdom, even though they are Christians. Some of them are seeking a particular standard of living, perhaps, or educational goals, or career goals.

They have plans for the future, and this is their dream. Their dream is to accomplish or to acquire X, fill in the blank. And that's what they're seeking.

That's what they're pursuing. But, you know, when you become a disciple of Jesus, becoming a disciple of Jesus is, by definition, following Jesus. And following Him means

you're pursuing Him.

And, in particular, you're pursuing His Kingdom. But, what does that mean? If you don't know what the Kingdom of God is, how can you know if you're pursuing the Kingdom of God? Maybe you're pursuing, you know, the advancement of a church, or a denomination, or something else. But, are you pursuing the Kingdom of God? How would you even know, unless you know what the Kingdom of God is? So, in our praying, in our preaching, and in our pursuing, and these are very practical areas.

The last is practical for all people. Everybody has got to decide what they're going to pursue. There's so many directions you can go in life.

You've got to figure out what the goal is, and go after that goal. And the Kingdom of God is the goal that Christians are supposed to seek and pursue. Now, for Christians, of course, praying and preaching are important things, too.

And all of this centers on the Kingdom of God, and cannot be rightly done, unless we know what we're talking about, know what God is talking about, when He uses that expression. So, let's talk about, let's try to define the Kingdom of God. In fact, we're going to be spending probably the rest of this session just working on this, because it is a controversial and complex topic.

And it's a difficult topic. It's difficult to define the Kingdom of God, because the term is used in a variety of ways in Scripture, but not in so many ways that they don't have some kind of cohesion to each other and make sense as a whole. We need to familiarize ourselves with the basic vocabulary of the Kingdom of God, as it's found in the Gospels.

And you'll find that the Kingdom of God, in the Gospels, is synonymous with the Kingdom of Heaven. It's a very important thing, because in the Gospel of Matthew, you will find many times the term Kingdom of Heaven. You will not find that expression anywhere else in the Bible.

Only Matthew uses that expression. And there are some, and this is one of the many controversial things about the Kingdom of God, there are some who believe the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are different concepts. And I've read in books by theologians how the Kingdom of God means this, and the Kingdom of Heaven has this other shade of meaning, and that we shouldn't confuse the two.

Well, the only author who ever used the expression Kingdom of Heaven in the Bible seems to have confused them, because he used them synonymously. He used them interchangeably. Matthew is that author.

And you can see on the screen there, from Matthew 19, 23 and 24, this is just one passage in Matthew, where we see their interchangeable use. Then Jesus said to his disciples, Assuredly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Now, I hope it's obvious that Jesus simply said the same thing twice. It would be obvious even if he hadn't said, I say it again. But since he says, I say it again, it should be unmistakable.

He said the same thing twice. What? It's difficult, exceedingly difficult, for a person with affluence to enter the kingdom, which in Matthew's version is at one time called the Kingdom of Heaven, and the other time called the Kingdom of God. You can see he's using the terms interchangeably, and if that's not even clear here, you can see it from looking at other passages throughout the other Gospels, because of course Matthew has many passages that parallel passages in Mark and in Luke.

And many of the passages in Matthew, where Matthew uses the term Kingdom of Heaven, have parallels in Mark and Luke, but in those parallels the term Kingdom of Heaven is not used, but rather the synonym, Kingdom of God, is used. For example, in Mark 1, verses 14 and 15, it says, Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel.

But the parallel statement in Matthew's Gospel, which is in Matthew 4.17, says from that time, that is from the time John was put in prison, in the context, Jesus began to preach and say, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Now in Mark he says the kingdom of God is at hand. In Matthew, recording essentially the same material, he said the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Now, which did Jesus say? Did he say kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven? Perhaps both, but let me explain to you the prominent theory, which I think is correct, as to why Matthew, and Matthew alone, uses that term Kingdom of Heaven, and apparently substitutes that for kingdom of God, in certain places where the other Gospels use only the term kingdom of God. Matthew, I think scholars are agreed, is the only one of the Gospels written to a Jewish audience. Mark was written to Gentiles, it is generally assumed, in Rome.

Luke wrote to a Gentile man, probably a Greek man, named Theophilus. And John wrote in Ephesus, and most people think he wrote to the Christians of Asia Minor, who were mostly Gentiles. Matthew, however, is a Gospel that has many marks of being directed to a Jewish audience.

And I won't go over all of those marks now, but we have it from Papias, an early church father, that Matthew's Gospel actually had an earlier draft. The Gospel of Matthew as we have it was written in Greek, but there was apparently an earlier draft of Matthew's Gospel written in Aramaic, or Hebrew, the language Jesus spoke, and apparently

Matthew was the earliest to write a collection of the sayings of Jesus in the actual language Jesus spoke, Aramaic. So said Papias, a church father who lived at the end of the first century.

And we scholars tend to trust his testimony on these matters, he seems to be authoritative. And then later on, the Gospel of Matthew fleshed out that earlier document and translated it into Greek. We only have the latter, we only have the Greek Gospel of Matthew.

But since he originally wrote it in Hebrew, that adds weight to the other evidence that Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience. They were the people who spoke Aramaic, other people didn't. We know another thing about the Jews, and that is that even to this day, very devout Orthodox Jews have an aversion to the use of the word God.

Do they not? Have you ever seen a Jew who will spell God, G, and then dash, D? They're leaving out the O. It's because they have an aversion to using the word God too frequently, too flippantly. They don't want to take the name of God in vain. That's basically their thinking about this.

They don't want to use the name too freely because then it becomes too casual and they may take his name in vain. So they are cautious about using the name God. And in some cases will substitute the word heaven for the word God.

We see this in Luke's gospel, not about the kingdom of heaven, but a Jewish boy is described by Jesus in the well-known story of the prodigal son. And he runs away from home. He doesn't run away.

He goes away and takes half his father's estate with him. He squanders it, and he realizes he's done wrong. He wants to come home, and he's repentant.

And what does Jesus say the man says, this young man? He says, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. What's he mean? I've sinned against God is what he means. But as a good Jew, he's cautious about using the word God when he can substitute the word heaven.

The Jews would not say, God bless you. They would say, heaven bless you. Because that way they could make sure they would not be taking the name of the Lord in vain.

Now Matthew is writing to Jews. He was a Jew writing to Jews. Whether Jesus had this scruple, and Jesus himself used the term kingdom of heaven, we don't know.

Jesus might indeed have used the term kingdom of heaven, and it's the other Gospels that substituted kingdom of God for their Gentile audiences so that their audiences who don't know the Hebrew idiom would recognize what he's talking about. On the other hand, Jesus might have used the term kingdom of God, and Matthew, writing to a Jewish

audience, substituted kingdom of heaven so as not to rub against their sensitivities over much. But in Matthew's Gospels, we find both terms, kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God.

And as we saw in chapter 19 of Matthew, they are used interchangeably. So apparently the Jews, you know, they didn't chafe too much against the term kingdom of God if it was used sparingly. But it would appear that Matthew used the term kingdom of heaven, or that Jesus did, or both, because they were desirous not to unnecessarily offend their Jewish hearers or readers.

But that doesn't change the fact that kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God only are different terms for the same thing. We're not talking about two different concepts. Any theologian who says there's a shade of difference in the meaning of kingdom of heaven than in the term kingdom of God is not paying very good attention to the data of Scripture, because all the places that Matthew has the term kingdom of heaven, the parallels in Mark and Luke say kingdom of God.

It's obvious that the two authors are simply using different terms for the same statement that Jesus made. Having said that, we come to our next important point in defining the kingdom of God. Although the kingdom of God is synonymous with kingdom of heaven, it is not synonymous with heaven.

Now that is something that really threw me off in the early years of my life, because when Jesus talked about entering the kingdom of heaven, it's difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, I just assumed that meant it's difficult for him to go to heaven, right? Because I thought kingdom of was used as a modifier, sort of like you'd say the kingdom of Spain or the kingdom of France. In other words, kingdom of was just a way of saying the kingdom that is called Spain or France, and that kingdom of heaven simply meant the kingdom that is called heaven. In other words, heaven.

But that is not at all what it means. As we saw, the term kingdom of heaven could be misleading if we think that it means heaven, because heaven is being simply substituted for the word God. The things that are said about the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven in scripture, most of them could never be applied to where we go when we die, necessarily.

Some of them, there is a future aspect of the kingdom sometimes mentioned. But we have scriptures like this one, Matthew 6.10, which you know very well. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Now, you see, this is actually Hebrew poetry. Although it was written in Greek, Jesus spoke in Hebrew, and he spoke to Hebrews. This is a parallelism.

The prophets spoke in poetry, and Hebrew poetry was known for its parallelism, not for

its rhyme or for its meter. Hebrews had different ways of distinguishing poetry from prose. If you read the Psalms, if you read the Proverbs, you read Job, you read most of the pages in the books of the prophets, you find they're all written in Hebrew poetry.

And what distinguishes Hebrew poetry from Hebrew prose is that Hebrew poetry says the same thing twice, or three times, in different terms, just for emphasis. Jesus, speaking in the same way, was saying, Your kingdom come, that's saying it one time, now let me say it again, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That is, these are parallel statements.

Asking God for his kingdom to come, to come where? How could his kingdom be heaven? Is heaven supposed to come here? No, something is supposed to happen here the way it is happening in heaven. God's will is done in heaven. There is nothing in heaven going on that isn't God's will, but there are things on earth going on that aren't God's perfect will.

And therefore, our prayer is that what is happening in heaven, in terms of the perfection of the will of God being done, will also be done on earth. And that is related to what it means when we say, May your kingdom come here. In other words, it's not heaven where we go to, it comes here.

Now, I do plan to go to heaven. I'm just saying that the kingdom is not synonymous with heaven. It's a different concept, as we'll see as we go through much more Scripture on this.

Now, another point about this, the kingdom of God is not synonymous with the millennium. Now, those of you who listen to me on the radio know that I have somewhat different millennial views than some people, and that's not an issue here. Well, it may be, but it's not something that we have to discuss right now.

Let us assume that there is a coming millennial kingdom that Jesus will establish at his second coming. This is the most common view among evangelicals today. And many feel that that millennial kingdom is what Jesus was referring to as the kingdom.

In fact, there is one school of thought that teaches that Jesus came offering the millennial kingdom to Israel at his first coming. And had they been more receptive, it would have been inaugurated right then and there. But because the Jews rejected the Messiah, rejected the kingdom that he offered, it was postponed.

And Jesus left and took the kingdom offer with him, and he will return and establish the kingdom at his second coming. This is probably the most prominent view you'll hear on Christian radio and in many Christian churches and popular books. Well, we should test that theory.

Is it true that Jesus offered the millennial kingdom at his first coming, and the Jews



rejected it? Well, what is the millennial kingdom? Well, the way most people describe it, the millennial kingdom is when the Messiah sits on David's throne in Jerusalem and rules all the world. And all the nations are subject to him, but the Jews especially are prominent. The Jews, in fact, are the people of the Messiah, and the rest of the world honors the Jews and the Messiah, according to the millennial hope.

This is the hope the rabbis had, and this is the hope that many Christians believe was the rabbis. They believe the rabbis were correct in this. And so the suggestion is that Jesus actually came to offer himself as a political ruler to Israel.

And if they had received him, he would have set up his throne right where David had sat in Jerusalem, and he would have ruled Israel and eventually the world from that point. But, unfortunately, the Jews didn't accept him in that role. Well, that's not exactly true.

If you look at John chapter 6 and verse 15, you'll find that after Jesus fed the 5,000, John 6 and verse 15 says, When Jesus perceived that the multitudes were about to take him by force and make him king, he withdrew to a quiet place by himself and sent the crowds away. In other words, Jesus wasn't offering himself as that kind of king and they rejected him. It's the other way around.

They wanted to forcibly make him their king in that way, and he was not interested in that. That was not his program. That wasn't what he was offering.

As a matter of fact, in his final prayer in John 17, I think it's verse 4 if I'm not mistaken, Jesus said when he was praying at the end of his ministry, he said, Father, I have finished the work that you gave me to do. Nothing was left undone. Now, if he had come down to establish a political kingdom with himself sitting on David's throne, ruling the world, and that had to be scrapped, that had to be postponed, then it would not really be very reasonable for Jesus to say, I've done everything you sent me to do here, when in fact the very most important central thing he came to didn't get done at all.

The truth is Jesus did accomplish everything his father sent him here to do, and he did exactly all that he was supposed to do with reference to the kingdom of God, or else he couldn't have said that at the end of his life. I've fulfilled all the work that you gave me to do, Father. It was not that Jesus came to offer a political kingdom.

That is indeed what the Jews expected. That is what the rabbis expected. And that was even, I believe, what the disciples expected after the resurrection initially, until the Spirit came and they began to have their views reshaped, as we shall see.

But not quite yet. The fact that it's not synonymous with a thousand-year millennium is clear from a great number of scriptures, like this one, which I'm sure is familiar to you, Isaiah 9, 6 and 7. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. The government will be upon his shoulder.

Now, by the way, many people assume this is a passage about the millennium, but it says, His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government, that is His rule, His kingdom, of the increase of His government and peace, there will be no end upon the throne of David and over His kingdom to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. This is not a thousand-year reign.

This is a forever reign without an end. Now, a thousand years is a very long regime, but it does have an end. A thousand years has an end, but not the kingdom that the Messiah rules over.

There will be no end to it. And this is not the only scripture that says that, frankly. Almost all the Old Testament scriptures about it say that.

If you want to show us the one in Daniel, got it? Daniel 2, 44. Daniel said, as he's interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream, And in the days of these kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. And the kingdom shall not be left to other people.

It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Again, it's not a thousand-year kingdom. It's a kingdom that stands forever, will never be surrendered to anyone else, will never have an end.

And Daniel 7 also has a very famous prophecy about this. This slide comes from two different passages in Daniel 7, one's verses 13 and 14, and then the other verse is verse 27. But he says, I was watching in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven.

He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. Then to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.

His kingdom is one which shall not be destroyed. And then in verse 27, Then the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole of heaven shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all the nations shall serve and obey him.

It's starting to sound a little redundant, I know, but frankly, that's how the Old Testament was. On this point, it was, I suppose we could say, redundant, at least very repetitious. Because every time the Messiah's kingdom, or the kingdom of God, was predicted to come, it always was said it would be forever and never end.

Even in the New Testament, in Luke chapter 1, this is what the angel said to Mary when he announced that she was going to have a child, and he was telling her something of the significance of her child. It says, He will be great and will be called the Son of the

Highest, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there will be no end.

You'll see that's simply language from the Old Testament, from a number of the passages we've already seen. The Old and New Testament both say the same thing. There was a kingdom predicted in the prophets.

Clearly the angel said that Jesus would be the one who would be the fulfillment of that. And of that kingdom there would be no end. It would be eternal forever.

Not a thousand years. So if there's a thousand year reign after Jesus comes back, it is not equivalent to the kingdom of God. It is not synonymous with the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is obviously somewhat more expansive and more inclusive than that. Okay, what is the relationship of the kingdom of God to Israel? This is important. It's one of the many controversies about the kingdom of God that still exists among Christians.

But it was even controversial initially in the early days of the book of Acts. Israel believed that the Messiah was going to be Israel's Messiah, and therefore the Messiah would exalt Israel above all the nations. And when the Messiah would reign over all the nations, those nations would acknowledge Israel as the people of the Messiah and as the ruling nation.

Yes, all nations would have a righteous regime. They'd all live in prosperity and so forth as long as they were obedient to the Messiah. But the Jews would be the ruling class.

And that's what they understood. Now after Jesus had risen from the dead and spent 40 days with his disciples, and just before he ascended into heaven in their sight, they asked him about this very thing in Acts 1, verses 6-8. It says, Now there's something interesting about his answer there.

First of all, he didn't say yes or no. He didn't say, yes, I am now going to restore the kingdom of Israel. And he did not say, no, I'm not going to do that.

Nor did he say, you are understanding this incorrectly. Nor did he tell them they're understanding it correctly. He skirted their question, it sounds like, but maybe not.

He said, what's going to happen now is that the Spirit is going to come upon you. You'll become my witnesses, eventually, not only in Jerusalem and Samaria, but to the uttermost parts of the earth. That last line, the uttermost parts of the earth, is a line from Psalm 2, in verse 8. In Psalm 2, verse 8, it's a messianic psalm.

In fact, there's four psalms that are called great kingdom psalms. That's what Old Testament scholars usually refer to them as, the kingdom psalms. There's four of them.

Psalm 2 is the first of them. Psalm 45 is another, and Psalm 72. And Psalm 110.

Those four psalms describe the kingdom of the Messiah, in various ways. And in Psalm 2, speaking of the kingdom of the Messiah, it says in verse 7, I will declare the decree that the Lord has said to me, you are my son, this day I have begotten you. So that's the Messiah speaking about what his Father has said to him.

The Father has said to the Messiah, you're my son, this day I have begotten you. Then the Lord continues to speak to the Messiah, saying, ask of me, and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. Now, the uttermost parts of the earth.

Jesus said, you'll be my witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. Now, the promise to the Messiah was that the Father would give him the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. That's the kingdom coming into its fullness.

And how does that happen? Well, Jesus said, okay, let's not worry about the timing of all this. Let's just get on the program here. You become my witnesses.

When the Spirit comes upon you, you be my witnesses, and you'll bear witness to the uttermost parts of the earth. Now, the disciples didn't understand at that point in time, I don't think. But they later did, as their writings tell.

That's how the kingdom was to be promoted. That's how the Messiah was to come into possession of the uttermost parts of the earth, as his inheritance, according to Psalm 2-8, through his message of the kingdom. Being proclaimed to the uttermost parts of the earth, and by people submitting to that message.

And we'll see more about that message shortly. But the point here is, the disciples were still thinking in terms of, you know, it's just all about Israel. But if you'll look over at Romans 9-6, Paul said, it's not as though God's word has failed.

What word? His word to restore the kingdom to Israel. That's what the Old Testament promised. Has that failed to come true? No, Paul says it has not failed to come true.

Rather, it's not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Now, what's that convoluted statement mean? Well, that means that when God made promises to Israel, he was referring to an entity that does not include everybody who has Jewish blood in them. Not everyone who's descended from Israel is the definitive Israel.

Only a remnant in the nation of Israel are the Israel that the promises have been fulfilled to. God's word has not failed to come true. It has, in other words, it has come true.

It hasn't failed. Jesus didn't fail to establish the kingdom. He didn't fail to restore the

kingdom to Israel.

You just have to understand, it hasn't failed. It's that not all who are descended from Israel are the Israel in question. Okay? Obviously, we have to know what Israel is.

And that's what Jesus didn't get on with his disciples at that time. You know why? They were far from ready to learn about this particular concept because it was still years after the day of Pentecost before they even knew that Gentiles could be saved without being circumcised. Peter, the leader of the apostles, didn't even know that until he got a special vision years after Pentecost on a housetop.

And he went to a household of cronies and suddenly got the revelation. Wow, you know, people who aren't Jewish can even be saved. I mean, how clueless were these guys? Well, Jesus had said just a few nights before, before his ascension, in the upper room in John 16, 13, Jesus said, I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

However, when the Holy Spirit comes, he will lead you into all truth. In other words, my training of you has not been completed. I've been here for three and a half years with you, working on you, and it's not that I've failed.

It's that you're not ready yet for everything. You've got to grow into some of this information because you're not at a place where you have the frame of reference to accept and understand or appreciate it. It could blow you away.

And therefore, he says, when the Holy Spirit comes, he'll guide you at his own pace into truth. And so we see years after Pentecost, they finally learn, oh, Gentiles can be saved too. Paul got this, I think, probably more than even the other apostles did, and we get most of it from Paul's writings.

But the point I'm making is, when the disciples said, are you going to now restore the kingdom to Israel, Jesus just said, let's not worry about that right now. Let's just get on with the project of being my witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth, so that you'll soon understand that that project is what you're asking about. That's what I believe he's saying.

I'm paraphrasing, and that's not always safe. Now, this is just for the sake of answering New Agers, if you've ever talked to them. Well, New Agers often will say that Christ is in everyone.

We're all Christ, really. We just need to come into a Christ consciousness. And they'll use various scriptures.

One of them they like a lot is where Jesus said, the kingdom of God is within you. That's Luke 17, 20 and 21. It says, now when he was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them and said, the kingdom of God does not come with

observation, nor will they say, see here or see there, for indeed the kingdom of God is within you.

Now, the things he said before the kingdom of God is within you are very important because the kingdom of God does not come in an observable way. When it comes, people won't be able to say, oh, there it is. Oh, there it is.

He said, you can't say that because it's not that kind of a kingdom. It's a different kind of a kingdom. But then he says, the kingdom of God is within you.

What does that mean? Well, he certainly is not saying that his listeners had the kingdom of God in them. They were the Pharisees. They were the people who later conspired for his death.

They didn't have any kingdom of God in them. They were far from the kingdom. He was not saying that there is something, some essence, some spiritual, mystical quality that's in all people, including them, called the kingdom of God.

I mean, if he meant it there, he certainly didn't mean what he said in all the other passages on the subject. So what did he mean? Well, you may know, and you may have a different translation. Many translators have translated, the kingdom of God is among you, or in your midst, which is no doubt what is intended.

Within means within your ranks, or within the crowd here. Among you, the kingdom of God is. Now, this could be a reference either to himself, because he was moving among them, and this is very probably what he means, or he could even be referring to those persons who are already disciples and the germinal members of the kingdom of God, the subjects of the king that were already there in the crowd.

Whatever he meant, he wasn't saying it's something mystical inside every man, or woman. He was saying that right here in your midst, the kingdom has arrived, and you have not noticed it. You know why? Because you're looking for something where you can say, oh, there it is, or there it is.

You think that's going to come with observation. That was the Jewish anticipation. He says it's not going to come that way.

It's different than that. It comes very differently. It's already here, and you haven't even apprehended it, haven't even noticed it.

It's already among you. That's what Jesus is saying, apparently. That he was not saying that it's some mystical essence inside every person.

It's seen from a great number of scriptures, like these ones. Luke 16, 16. The law and the prophets were until John.

Since that time, the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. The kingdom isn't something that is inside of you. It's something you get into, if you get into it.

Not everyone will enter it, but the ones who do will have to press in. They'll have to be determined to get in. This isn't something that's residing in all of us passively, that we just need to realize the Christ consciousness, but rather the kingdom of God is something external to ourselves that we have to get into.

People have to press into it, or they won't be in it. In Matthew 5, 20, Jesus said, For I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 7, 21.

Jesus said, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. We're going to come back to some of those scriptures to make other points later in the series, but I just want to point out that when Jesus speaks of the kingdom, he's speaking of something you need to get into. It's not something that's in you.

When he said, The kingdom of God is within you, it's better understood, the kingdom of God is in your midst, among the crowd. And he's not talking about an interior quality that his listeners had. One other thing about defining the kingdom, and that is that the Bible reveals in the New Testament what is not real clear in the Old, and that is that the kingdom of God is not a political entity, it is a spiritual entity.

Now, I just said it's not a mystical entity that's in each person. It is external to you, but you need to get into it, and it is not a political movement. If it was as the Jews thought, if it was just a matter of Israel, you know, having a new king sitting on David's throne, and conquering all the Gentiles, and bringing them under tribute, and so forth, then getting into that would be a matter of simply going and becoming a citizen of Israel, or swearing allegiance to that movement, or to their king, and you'd be in a political situation.

But the kingdom of God, which the Jews anticipated, they expected a political kingdom, but Jesus had a hard time getting it across to them, even to the great teacher of Israel, Nicodemus, that the kingdom of God is not physical. If it was, you could get into it without being born other than physically. But he made it clear you have to be born spiritually to get into it, because it's a spiritual thing.

And we know this passage, John 3, verses 3 through 7, Jesus answered and said to Nicodemus, Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Now, it might be saying you have to have spiritual eyes to see the spiritual entity, although the word see might simply mean experience, because later on, in fact, at the end of the same chapter, John says, Whoever does not believe in Christ shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. So see life means experience life.

Perhaps see the kingdom of God means experience it. I don't know if Jesus is talking about seeing it in the sense of perception, or seeing it in that other sense of just experiencing it. But in any case, he makes it clear you won't be a part of it unless you're born again.

And Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. If it was a physical, political kingdom, you would only have to be born of the flesh.

That is naturally born. Everyone has been born once, or else they're not anybody. And if it was a material kingdom, being born once would be fine.

But it's a spiritual kingdom, so you have to be born also of the Spirit. Not just of the flesh, but also of the Spirit. Not just of water, but of the Spirit.

He says, Don't marvel that I said to you you have to be born again. In Romans 14, 17, we have the most succinct definition of the kingdom of God in the Bible. The truth of the matter, it's the only definition.

It's the only thing that resembles the definition of the kingdom of God in the Bible, because it's the only place that says the kingdom of God is this. And Paul says, The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking. And what he means by that is the Jewish religion was very much taken up with what you're allowed to eat, what you're allowed to drink, what you're allowed to touch, and so forth.

A lot of concerns about kosher, clean and unclean things. Paul says, The kingdom of God is not part of that whole system. That's not what it's about.

It's not about eating and drinking. What the kingdom of God is, is as follows. It is righteousness, it is peace, and it is joy.

In the Holy Spirit. Now, if he had left off the in the Holy Spirit part, he would be simply saying what the Old Testament prophets said about the kingdom. It's a kingdom of justice.

The word righteousness and justice are the same in the Greek. In the Old Testament, the kingdom is described as a kingdom of righteousness and justice under the righteous Messiah. It is described as a kingdom of peace.

They beat their swords and their plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and they don't learn war anymore. That's what Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 tell us about the kingdom. It's a kingdom of peace.



It's a kingdom of joy. Many of the passages about the kingdom talk about the rejoicing and the virgin rejoicing and the dance and the young men and old men together and they shall rejoice and they shall return with joy and singing in their hearts and so forth. The kingdom of God as described in the prophets was a kingdom of justice or righteousness, a kingdom of peace, and it was a kingdom of rejoicing or joy.

Paul says, well, yeah, the kingdom of God is exactly all those things in the Holy Spirit. So, when the kingdom of God is described as being righteousness, peace, and joy, this is not talking about a political situation that pervades the world. No, it's in the Holy Spirit.

It's a spiritual kingdom. That's why you have to be born of the Spirit or you can't see it, you can't enter it. It's a spiritual reality.

It basically takes the main features of the kingdom of God that are predicted in the Old Testament and says, the kingdom of God is indeed those things. But, spiritually speaking, I, as a person who followed Jesus and you who follow Jesus, if He is my King and my Lord, then I'm His subject. I'm part of His kingdom and I experience righteousness.

Do I not? Do you not? You have righteousness in Christ. If you don't know that, then you need to know the Gospel. You are righteous by faith in Christ.

You are counted righteous. The Holy Spirit has come inside you, has put you into Christ, and in Christ you share in His righteousness. You also have a fruit of the Spirit that's called peace and another fruit of the Spirit called joy according to Galatians.

Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22. These are spiritual things. Now, in my circumstances, I don't have peace and even our world certainly doesn't have peace at this point.

I have sons who are probably at the age that if a draft came along, which I hope it will not, they might end up in Iraq or they might end up in a pine box. There's not peace in the world. But Jesus said that.

The last thing He said in the Upper Room Discourse before He went and got crucified, He said, These things I've spoken to you that in Me you might have peace. In the world, you're not going to have peace. In the world, you'll have tribulation.

But be of good cheer. I've conquered the world, He said. I've overcome the world.

He is the world conqueror, He said. And He's not talking about sometime thousands of years hence. He's talking about where He was standing.

Be of good cheer. I have conquered the world, just like the Messiah was supposed to do. Doesn't seem very much like He conquered the world.

The world still seems to be in rebellion. But we'll talk more about how that statement is

true. But the point I wanted to make is, He said, I'm saying these things to you so that in Me you have peace.

In the world, no peace necessarily. You have tribulation in the world. But you live in two realms.

When you become a Christian, you still live in the world as you did before, but now you live in another realm that you didn't live in before. In Christ. And in the world, you have tribulation.

But in Him, you have peace. In the Holy Spirit. It's a fruit of the Spirit.

And joy. The Kingdom of God is spiritual. The things the Old Testament writers said about the Kingdom of God were given in the language that the Jewish people of the time, who were not spiritual, could appreciate.

Oh, that sounds like a good thing. When the Messiah comes, He'll give us righteousness. He'll give us peace.

He'll give us joy. That sounds good. Well, He did do all that to those who received Him.

The Jews who didn't receive Him didn't receive much of that. They don't have peace over there even now. As you well know if you read the news.

But it's not that the Word of God has not taken effect, Paul said in Romans. It's not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. He did bring the Kingdom to Israel.

But that Israel that He brought to were the remnant who were believers. They were the people who were in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. And the Spirit came upon them.

And they received the righteousness and the peace and the joy and the Holy Spirit. And they went around to spread that to all the other Jewish people they could reach. Not all the Jewish people received it.

Even to this day, of course, most don't. But some do. And that Israel, that remnant of Israel did come into the Kingdom.

Paul said in Colossians 1.13 that God has translated us out of the power of darkness. This is past tense. God has translated us out of the power of darkness into what? Into the Kingdom of His dear Son.

And the Kingdom of Jesus. The Kingdom of God. Now, Paul says that's already happened to you and me.

God has taken us from the power of darkness where we were bound, where we were

enslaved, where we were in bondage. And He has repositioned us. He has translated us into the Kingdom of Christ.

We are in it. Now that doesn't mean there's nothing more to expect. And that's what is going to be brought out as we go through the different weeks of this study.

But there is a future realization of the Kingdom of God universally that has not yet been experienced. The world has not yet seen the realization of the complete manifestation of God's Kingdom, which it will when Jesus returns. But we don't have to wait till then to be in the Kingdom.

We have been translated into the Kingdom already. And we don't have to wait to have righteousness, peace, and joy. We can have those.

If we are Christians, we do have those in the Holy Spirit. The Kingdom, when Jesus said it was at hand, He was not lying. It was at hand.

And it came very soon after He announced it. It came to those who were the true Israel. The remnant of Israel who we call them the disciples.

They were the faithful in Israel who received the Messiah. Just like in Elijah's day, there were some faithful in Israel. Israel mostly apostate, but some were loyal.

God said to Elijah, there are 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Pretty small remnant for the whole country, but it's still some. And in the days of all the prophets, there was always a remnant in Israel.

The prophets always came when Israel was apostate as a nation, but there was always a remnant who were faithful. And they listened to the prophets. And when Jesus came, they listened to the Messiah and became what we call disciples, also called Christians later on.

The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. It says in Acts 11.26. So the kingdom of God was established with that remnant. Now, most of us are not Jewish by birth, and therefore we're not part of that remnant of Israel, or are we? Paul says that remnant of Israel is like an olive tree in Romans 11.

He says it's like an olive tree. Now, Paul got that illustration from Jeremiah 11 where God called Israel a green olive tree. In Jeremiah, it says that some of the branches were broken off.

He means some of the Jews have been carried off into Babylon. But Israel was an olive tree, and some of its branches were broken off and carried to Babylon. But Paul picks up that image from Jeremiah, and he says, you know, if the root of the tree is holy, then all the branches on the tree are holy too.

But some of the branches have been broken off. Obviously, they're not holy anymore because they're not part of the tree anymore. And who are the branches that were broken off? Paul said those Jews who did not believe in Christ are branches that were broken off of that olive tree.

They're not there anymore. And what has taken their place? He says, and you, Gentiles, as formerly branches from a wild olive tree have been grafted in among the ones that are still there. Well, what branches are still there that were there originally? The believing remnant of Israel.

Only the unbelieving Israelites were broken off, like branches that were fruitless. So the believing remnant of Israel were still part of that tree after this pruning. But then Gentiles who believe in the Messiah are added in to that tree too.

What is the tree? The tree is Israel. It's got Jewish branches, which are those who are the believing remnant of Israel. And it's got Gentile branches.

The olive tree Israel is now multiracial because God does not judge by who your grandparents were, or who your great grandparents were, or who your ancestors were. God judges by who you are and where you stand with Him. God has no grandchildren, Corrie ten Boom used to say.

He doesn't have any grandchildren. He doesn't have any great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandchildren either. He only has children.

Only children. And if you're born again, you are born into His kingdom. And you are grafted into that tree of Israel.

And God thus restores the kingdom to Israel. Now, let's move along real quickly here. We've got only less than 15 minutes.

Let's talk about the kingdom as a people. I suggested that when Jesus said, the kingdom of God is in your midst, He might have meant the disciples in the crowd were the representatives of the kingdom that were there in the midst of the crowd. Certainly it would fit, because in Exodus 19, 5 and 6, we have the very first reference in the Bible to the kingdom.

You never read before this of God having a kingdom. Before the Exodus, God had friends. Abel was one of His friends.

Certainly Enoch was one of His friends. Noah was. Abraham was a friend of God.

And so Isaac and Jacob and so forth, and Joseph as well. But then they went into Egypt for 400 years. And I don't know how many of them were His friends then.

But He found a friend in Moses. And He used Moses to deliver the people out of Egypt.

And they went to Mount Sinai.

And there God had all of His friends and some people who weren't very friendly to Him still, gathered there at the foot of Mount Sinai. And He made a covenant with them. And He said, if you will obey My voice indeed, and if you will keep My covenant, then you will be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people for all the earth is Mine, and you shall be a kingdom, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

And He said to Moses, these are the words you are to speak to the children of Israel. Moses was to tell the children of Israel, God is making a proposition to you. You can make a covenant with Him.

And if you are faithful to that covenant, you will be His kingdom. Now what does that mean? It means He would be their king. Now it's a shame that we have so many years of religious jargon that words like this kind of just, they go over our head, we don't think of their ramifications.

When God said to Israel, you can be My kingdom, it was in the context where there were many kingdoms, and all of them had kings. Every nation on the planet had a king. There were no democracies then.

There were only monarchies. Every nation in the world had its own king, of course. There were kingdoms.

That's what a kingdom is. A king and his subjects is what a kingdom is. And God's saying to Israel, if you'll be faithful to My covenant and obey what I say, in other words, if you'll respond to Me like people respond to a king, then I'll be your king and you'll be My kingdom.

Now there's a lot of advantages in being God's kingdom, having Him as a king. He's like the biggest, toughest king around. You know what I mean? If you're going to have any troubles with any of the neighboring nations, having God as your king is way better than anyone else.

And, of course, God, who is so benevolent towards people, is able to prosper and bless all those who are His kingdom as no other king on the planet can possibly do. And He actually made promises to them. You know, if you keep this covenant, you'll be blessed in your basket, you'll be blessed in your store, you'll be blessed in the city, you'll be blessed in the field, you'll be blessed in the fruit of your womb, you'll be blessed in your cattle.

But if you break My covenant, He said in Deuteronomy 28, 15, if you break My covenant, you'll be cursed in all those ways. This kingdom relationship I'm talking about is conditional. You keep My covenant, you obey My voice, and you'll be My kingdom.

But it's conditional. Well, you know what happened? They didn't do very well. But God was very forgiving.

I mean, a few days after this, they made a golden calf and broke His covenant right then. He was about ready to wipe them out, but Moses interceded, and God said, okay, I'll give them another chance. But they, through the period of the judges, for hundreds of years, they had their cycles of revering God or not.

In the period of judges, we have one judge named Gideon who delivered the people of Israel from the oppression of the Midianites. After Gideon delivered the people, the people said to Gideon, rule over us, both you and your son and your grandson also. In other words, let's set up a dynasty here.

You'll start the first dynasty of kings in Israel because you have delivered us from the hand of Midian. But Gideon said to them, I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you. The Lord shall rule over you.

Now, Gideon wasn't just being exceptionally pious here. He understood it'd be sacrilege for a man to rule over you when you already have a king. You're not like other nations that have men as kings.

You have God as your king. I'm not going to be your king. My son, my grandson, God is your king.

Let's hear no more about that suggestion. But you know what? At the end of the period of the judges in 1 Samuel 8, verses 6 through 7, the elders of Israel came to Samuel, who was the last judge of them all. And it says, they said, give us a king like all the nations.

Now, that sounds like a reasonable suggestion. All the other nations have kings. Why shouldn't they? Because God didn't intend for them to be like all the nations.

He expected them to be a peculiar people, a holy nation, a separate people where He's their king. But they came to Samuel and they said, give us a king to reign over us like all the nations. And it says, the thing displeased Samuel when they said, give us a king to judge us.

So Samuel prayed to the Lord and the Lord said to Samuel, heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me that I should not reign over them. That's pretty strong words. They had disobeyed God a great number of times before this, but God said, okay, now they've rejected me.

I gave them the opportunity to be my kingdom. I would be their king. I made promises to them like no king could ever make to his people and I could fulfill them like no king could do it, but they don't want it.

They've rejected me from being their king. And so He says, give them the king they want. And you know, later on in Hosea 13, verse 11, God is recalling this particular incident.

He says, I gave you a king in my anger, meaning Saul, and I took him away in my wrath. God gave them what they wanted, but with it leanness of Saul. God gave them their request, but He did it in anger.

He was not pleased to be rejected by them. I mean, they were the ones... He should have rejected them. He was a good king.

They were not good subjects. But you know, God decided after they'd had Saul for a while that He was going to set up a monarch instead of Saul who would be a good king and who would be subject to Him so that God could still kind of be their king, ruling over them through the agency of a human king as well. Not direct rule as before, but closer to it than what He had in Saul because Saul turned out to be a baddie.

And it says, because Saul rejected the word of the Lord, it says in 1 Samuel 15, verses 26-28, it says, Samuel said to Saul, I will not return with you for you have rejected the word of the Lord. This was their first king. And the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.

And Samuel turned around to go away, but Saul seized the edge of his robe and it tore. So Samuel said to him, The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to a neighbor of yours who is better than you. And that neighbor was David.

And David became the king, the second king of Israel after Saul. But God made promises to David because David was a man after God's heart. David was the kind of man God could rule a nation through because David feared God and revered God, at least in the early years of his reign.

And God made a promise to David in 2 Samuel 7, verses 12 and 13. He said to David, When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you who will come from your body and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

That sounds familiar. That's the beginning of these prophecies about the kingdom of the Messiah that will be forever. The seed of David.

You see, God established a dynasty from David. It was called the House of David. And the context was actually David wanted to build God a house, a temple.

And Nathan the prophet was told, No, you tell David, I don't want you to build me a house. I'll build you a house. Meaning a dynasty.

The House of David. And you'll have a king from your house on your throne forever. And in particular, there will be a seed of yours that I can establish his throne forever.

That is referencing to not just Solomon who replaced David on the throne, but to an ultimate king, the Messiah. There was a whole dynasty of 20 kings after David who reigned on his throne. But then there was the Babylonian exile.

In 586 BC, the Babylonians carried away the Jewish people from Jerusalem and from Judea. And for 70 years, they were in captivity. And when they returned after that, they didn't have a king.

They were vassals under the Persian emperor. Later, Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire and they were vassals then under the Grecian power. Later still, Pompeii conquered the territories that had been under the Grecian rule and that area came under the Roman rule.

So that in 63 BC, the region was under Roman power. And when Jesus was born, that's how things stood. Israel was under Roman dominion.

Now, from the time of Jeconiah, the king who was carried into the Babylonian exile, until the time of Christ, there had been no actual king of Israel, of David's line. It would seem that God's promise had failed to come true. However, the prophets had said that there would be a king of David's line that would indeed reign personally forever.

Now, David's line was to rule forever, but initially that was generation after generation because a man doesn't generally live forever. But the Messiah would be a king who would come from David's line and he would reign and he would reign forever. And therefore, the Jews, during the time of their captivity and during the time after they came back, were always pining away for God to establish His kingdom again in Israel under this Messiah who was to come.

Israel didn't all have the same opinion about what the Messiah would be like. Some of the rabbis thought He'd be a mere man, like David, only a great man. Some thought He'd be a divine being who'd come floating down from heaven.

Some of the rabbis taught, and this was a very prevalent thing in Jesus' day, that there'd be two Messiahs. One, Messiah ben David, would be the kingly Messiah and one, Messiah ben Joseph, would be the suffering Messiah. There are all these different theories, much confusion among the Jews.

But one thing they all knew is that God was going to establish His kingdom under Messiah and Israel would be prominent again. Now, when Jesus came, we know that He was heralded before His arrival by John the Baptist who said, The kingdom of God is at hand. Indicating that this long-awaited promise was about to be fulfilled.



And when Jesus heard that John was put in prison, Jesus went about Galilee saying the same thing, The kingdom of God is at hand. And so Jesus preached the kingdom. And the people initially were very excited about this.

They thought, Oh, this is indeed the Messiah. Many of the people felt that way. But Jesus didn't cooperate with their visions of the Messiah.

Their visions of the Messiah, as I said, were in many cases militaristic, a powerful militaristic type leader who would deliver them from the oppression they'd been under for so many years under the Romans. The people wanted to make Jesus a king. But He was not here to be that kind of king.

Was He not here to be a king? When He stood before Pilate, Pilate said, Are you a king? And Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom was of this world, my servants would have thought that I would not be taken into custody by the Jews. Now, that's interesting because kings who have the kind of kingdom David ruled over, which is what they thought the Messiah would have, Israel would become the glorious ruling nation of the nations under a king like David.

Well, those kind of kingdoms, they definitely fight. They have armies. They conquer their Philistines.

They conquer the Moabites. They conquer the people around them. They create a big empire by military conquest.

That's exactly what the Jews wanted. But Jesus said to Pilate, who is not a Jew himself, but He said, My kingdom is not of this world. He did not say My kingdom is not in this world.

And that's a very important distinction we're going to talk about. But He said, My kingdom does not originate from this world. It's not a kingdom that is of the same spirit and the same nature of the kingdoms of this world.

Because if it were, My servants would have fought to prevent their king from being captured. But they didn't. Not because they were cowards, but because that was not appropriate.

Because My kingdom is not that kind of kingdom. Well, most of the Jews were not interested in a kingdom that was not that kind of kingdom. In fact, they weren't at all clear what kind of kingdom it was He was offering at all.

And they began to be disillusioned with Him. And as we know, they turned against Him. Now, just before Jesus was crucified, He told two parables I'd like to call to your attention.

In Matthew 21, Jesus told a parable about a vineyard. Now, this was not entirely original. Isaiah had taught a parable about a vineyard also in Isaiah chapter 5. And in that parable, Isaiah had said that God had planted Israel like a vineyard.

And He was looking for fruit from that vineyard. As anyone who plants a vineyard wants to bring in the grapes. They want to have vintage from that vineyard.

And in Isaiah chapter 5, in verse 7, Isaiah said that God had come to Israel looking for fruit. And the fruit He was looking for was justice and righteousness. But instead, He found oppression and injustice.

Now, Jesus picked up the wording that is at the beginning of that parable that Isaiah taught in Isaiah 5. And He taught a parable similar in Matthew chapter 21. He said, a man owned a vineyard. He planted it with a choice vine.

He built a tower in it, put a wine press in it. He put a hedge around it to protect it from invading beasts. And he leased it out to tenants.

Now, in those days, if a person didn't have land of his own, he could lease land from a landowner who had more land than he knew what to do with. And the tenant then, who's leasing the land, could grow the crops and his rent on the land would be a portion of the vintage or a portion of the crops. And so Jesus said, when the time of the vintage came, the owner sent messengers to the tenants and said, where's my payment? Where's my grapes? And Jesus said, the tenants beat up the servants and threw them out of the vineyard.

So He sent more servants to them. And they beat them up too and killed some of them. And it says, last of all, He said, I will send my son.

Now, obviously, the servants who came before the son must be Old Testament messengers from God, clearly the prophets. The prophets came to Israel with God's message. Where's the fruit? Where's the justice? Where's the righteousness that God's looking for from this vineyard? And they got treated exactly the way that Jesus described.

They were beaten up. Most of them were killed. But last of all, He sent His son.

And He said, surely they'll reverence my son. But He says, the tenants of the vineyard, when they saw the son, they said, this is the heir. This is the one who's going to inherit this vineyard.

Let's kill him and then we'll inherit it. His portion will be ours. And so they killed the son.

As they had killed the other messengers. Now, there's no question what this parable means. I don't think it needs any explanation.

Clearly, it's about Jesus. But then Jesus said, after He told the story, He says, now, when the owner of that vineyard comes, what do you suppose He's going to do to those tenants of that vineyard? And His audience answered, He'll miserably destroy those wicked men and lease His vineyard out to others who'll give Him the fruits in its season. And Jesus said, that's right.

And then Jesus made this statement in Matthew 21, 43. He says, therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. Now, that's a very significant statement in view of all the Old Testament history.

Because the kingdom of God was first mentioned in association with Israel. If you keep my covenant, if you obey my voice, you can be my kingdom. Well, they didn't.

But He gave them chance after chance after chance. He was patient and patient and patient for about 1400 years. They killed all the prophets.

He sent. And finally, they killed His son too. And He said, well, that was your last chance.

It was last of all. He sent His son. No more.

Don't have anything better to send after that. And so He says, therefore, the kingdom of God is taken away from you. This is a major turning point.

And given to another nation. Now, some people have said, well, Jesus wasn't taking the kingdom from the nation of Israel. He was just taking it from the Jewish leaders and giving it to new Jewish leaders.

No. He's taking it from them and giving it to another nation. But what nation is that? Well, it's not a political nation because the kingdom of God is not a political kingdom.

Peter in 1 Peter 2. I don't have a slide for this. I'm sorry to say. 1 Peter 2, verses 9 and 10.

Peter is speaking to the Christians, the church. And he says, but we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation. A peculiar people that we should show forth the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God.

Who was not a people previously? The Gentiles were not a people previously. Who had not obtained mercy previously? The Gentiles had not previously obtained mercy from God. But now we have obtained mercy.

Now we are the people of God. This is 1 Peter 2, verses 9 and 10. And he said, we are a holy nation.

This is the nation to whom the kingdom is given. And this is made clear as you read the

epistles that are written afterward, or even as you read the book of Acts. There's another parable Jesus taught immediately after that.

In the beginning of chapter 22. In that parable, there was a king who wanted to make a marriage for his son. And he invited his friends first, but they all made excuses and didn't want to come.

And it says that the king, in verse 7 of that chapter, it says, the king, when he heard that his friends were not coming, was angry at them, and he sent out his armies and burned down their city. And then it says, the king said to his servants, the wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore, go into the highways and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.

Now you'll find this parable is exactly the parallel of the previous one. It has a different image. It's not a vineyard.

It's a wedding. But it's the same history. You've got the king.

You've got the owner of the vineyard. He sends his servants. The servants are abused by the people.

And then the king is angry. So what does he do? He punishes those ones who rejected his servants. He burns down their city.

You may be aware. The city of Jerusalem was burned down by the Romans in A.D. 70. God was angry because they had rejected his invitation to his son's wedding.

Then he says, they were not worthy. Therefore, go out and preach and bring people in from all over the place. Go out to the highways and bring people in from everywhere you can find them.

In other words, from outside Israel, from the Gentile lands. Both parables, the vineyard and the wedding, make the same point. The Jewish people as a race were first chosen to be the vineyard of God, to come to his wedding, to be in his kingdom.

But the generation of Jewish people in Jesus' day were not receptive. And for the most part, as you read the Old Testament, most of the generations were not very receptive. They killed the prophets and all.

And so God said, okay, that's the last straw. I'm now taking the kingdom from you. You were the first ones invited.

You weren't worthy. You didn't respond properly. Therefore, the message is going out to the highways and byways to bring in other people.

And I'm going to create a new nation that will bring forth the fruits of the kingdom. We

started out with Israel being offered the privilege of being God's kingdom on the condition of their obedience. We end with Jesus saying, no, it's taken from you now.

It's going to someone else now. The kingdom of God is not yours anymore. It's now going to some other group of people, another nation.

You know, I think we often think of ourselves as Christians. We're adherents to one of the world's great religions, but the right one. We're adherents to the true one.

You know, the world has great religions, billions of people in every religion, but ours is just the right religion. Well, it certainly is right and it certainly is true, but it's not so much a religion as it is a kingdom. Christianity is not so much a religion as it is a kingdom.

And if you don't know what the difference is, that's what we have to discuss because it has everything to do with what we're supposed to be doing here and what we're working for and what we're supposed to do day after tomorrow. Because we're supposed to be living under a king. And a lot of people say, well, Jesus is my Savior.

I'll negotiate the matter of Him being my Lord someday. No, if you are in the kingdom, you have a king now. A king and a Lord are not different things.

They're the same things. So, we need to understand what the Scripture teaches. Next time, I want to start out talking about what is the gospel of the kingdom.

Jesus said the gospel of the kingdom has to be preached in all the world. Is it being? What is the gospel? What is the good news of the kingdom? We need to know. We need to understand.

And that's what we're going to work on. So, let me dismiss you.